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Mentoring for Employment Success and More: Lessons Learned from the Ready4Work Reentry Initiative

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Mentoring for Employment Success and More

- Overview of the Ready4Work Initiative
- The relationship between mentoring and key program outcomes like employment and recidivism
- Mentoring services as implemented
 - ❖ structure and staffing for mentoring services
 - ❖ qualities of a good mentor
 - ❖ major challenges in mentoring former prisoners
- Effective strategies in implementing mentoring services within larger reentry programs.

Who Is P/PV?

➤ P/PV tackles critical challenges facing low-income communities—by seeking out and designing innovative programs, rigorously testing them, and promoting solutions proven to work.

➤ Reentry

- Ready4Work and Juvenile Ready4Work Initiatives
- Newark Prisoner Reentry Initiative
- Baltimore Empowerment Zone
- Maryland Public Safety Compact
- America Works Evaluation

P/PV Partnership: Ready4Work

\$25M Project (Publicly and Privately Funded)

- U.S. Department of Labor (ETA)
- U.S. Department of Justice (OJJDP)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Ford Foundation

P/PV's Role

- Program Developer
- Project Oversight
 - ❖ Site assessment and selection
 - ❖ Data collection and research design
 - ❖ Fiscal and program oversight
 - ❖ Organizational and programmatic technical assistance
- Research

Ready4Work Goals

- Reduce crime and recidivism
- Provide former prisoners with wrap-around supports that result in successful reintegration to communities and long-term attachment to the labor market
- Demonstrate that faith and community-based organizations should be a key part of a reentry strategy

Ready4Work Sites & Participants

- Demonstration: 17 Ready4Work Sites Nationwide
 - 11 Adult Sites (ages 18-34) served 4,482 individuals
 - 6 Juvenile Sites (ages 14-18) served 853 juveniles
- Implementing Sites: Community and Faith-Based Organizations (FCBOs), City Offices
- Partnerships between state corrections, businesses, government & FCBOs
- Participants recruited both pre and post-release

Ready4Work Services Received

Ready4Work (Adult) Participants (4,482 total):

- Case management- 97%
- Job training (mainly in the form of basic/soft skills)- 75%
- Job placement and/or retention- 75%
- Mentoring- 55%
- Other services:
 - ❖ Counseling- 52%
 - ❖ Life skills program- 43%

Adults participated on average 8 months

Employment & Recidivism Outcomes

	Ever Employed	Ever Employed Three Consecutive Months	Ever Employed Six Consecutive Months
Percentage of participants	56%	33%	15%
Percentage of participants who ever found a job	-	62%	36%
Percentage of participants who held a job for three consecutive months	-	-	52%

Recidivism: 6.9 percent of enrollees returned to prison within one year after release, compared to the national average of 10.4 percent

Why Mentoring?

- Research on ex-prisoners
 - *Former prisoners who obtain jobs and develop social bonds have lower recidivism rates*
 - *Yet, many lack the stable social bonds and family supports that can help them resume their lives*
- Prior to Ready4Work, very few programs for formerly incarcerated participants had tried mentoring as an intervention

Characteristics of Participants Engaged in Mentoring

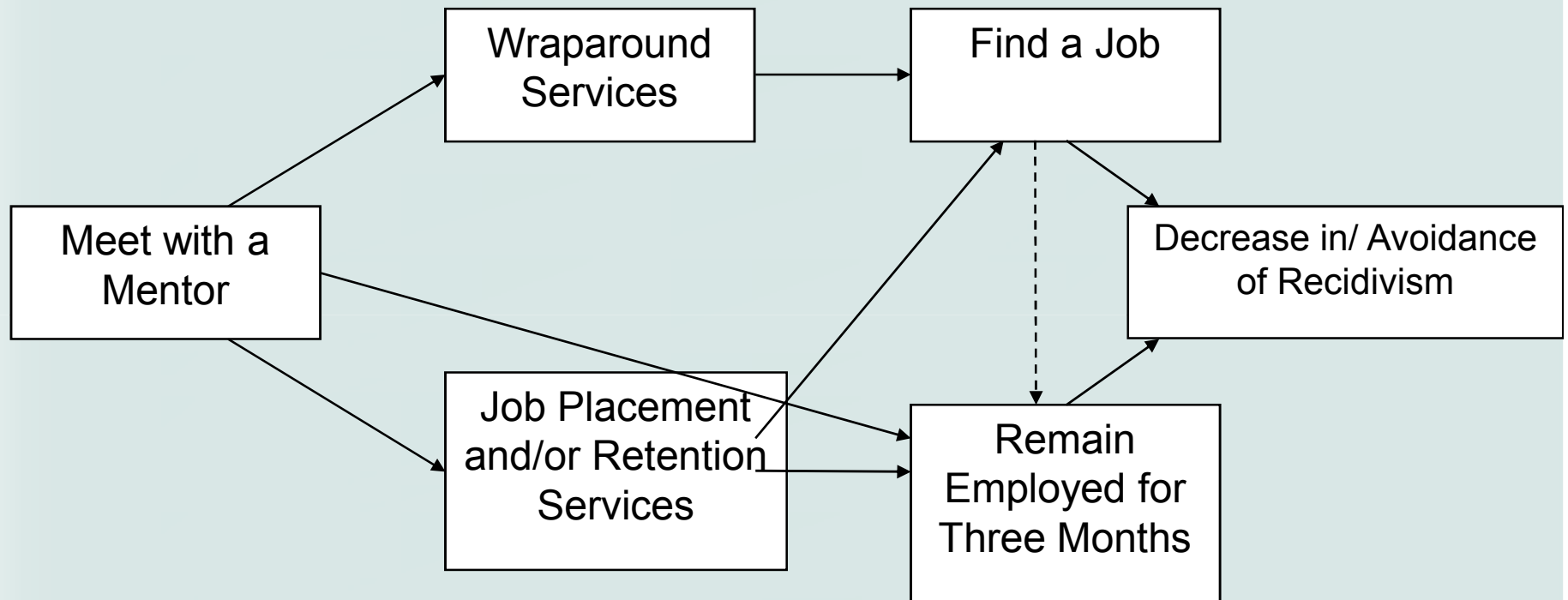
- A little more than half of all participants engaged in mentoring
- Those who chose to engage in mentoring, as compared to those that didn't were more likely to be:
 - Older participants
 - Females
 - Those expressing higher level of religiosity
 - Women without children
- Did not find differences between these groups on:
 - Ethnicity
 - Level of education
 - Criminal history
 - Time of enrollment in Ready4Work

The Relationship Between Mentoring and Outcomes

Participation in mentoring was related to...

- Program Retention
- Job Placement
- Job Retention
- Lower Recidivism

How Did Mentoring Provide These Benefits?



* Dashed line indicates a necessary relationship.

What Did the Ready4Work Participants Find Valuable about Mentoring?

- Emotional support
- Positive social support
- Practical support

Implementation of Ready4Work Mentoring

- Considerable variation in implementing mentoring across sites
- P/PV guidelines limited to:
 - Actively engage participants in one-to-one, group, or team mentoring relationships
 - Meet at least 4 hours per month
 - One year commitment from mentors
 - Mentors complete intake and monthly activity forms

Implementation of Ready4Work Mentoring

Common features of 11 sites' models:

- Operation
- Mentor coordinator
- Type of mentoring
- Engaging participant pre-release
- Goals

Who Were the Mentors?

- Over 1,000 mentors recruited for group & one-to-one mentoring
 - Ages 18-80 (average age 45)
 - 85% African-American
 - 50% African-American males (60% males)
- How were mentors recruited?
 - Congregations
 - Word of mouth
 - Outreach and advertisements

What Makes a Good Mentor?

- ✓ An ability to provide relational and world-of-work support
- ✓ A willingness to maintain regular contact
- ✓ A willingness to confer with case managers

What Makes a Good Mentor?

Good listening skills

- ✓ A nonjudgmental attitude
- ✓ Ability to help participants stay focused on the big picture
- ✓ An ability to support participants in transitioning back to the community and workplace
- ✓ A willingness to offer guidance, support and assistance with personal and work-related challenges
- ✓ An ability to help participants problem-solve and think about the choices they can make
- ✓ People with no criminal backgrounds
- ✓ People with criminal backgrounds

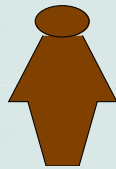
How Should the Mentoring Component be Structured?



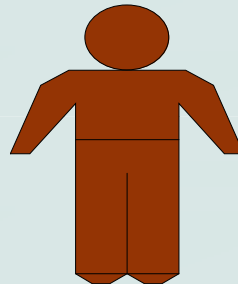
Case Manager



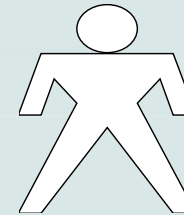
Job Trainer



**Mentor
Coordinator**



Former Prisoner



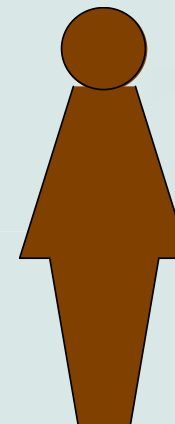
Job Placement Specialist

What is the Role of the Mentoring Coordinator?

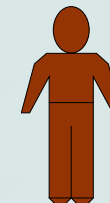
FULL OR PART-TIME:

- Mentor recruitment
- Mentor screening
- Mentor matching
- Support retention
- Match monitoring
- Working with other staff
- Marketing the program
- Planning events & activities
- Trouble shooting

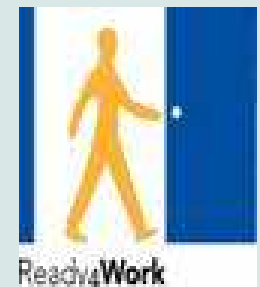
**Mentor
Coordinator**



Mentor



Former Prisoner



Challenges to Mentoring Former Prisoners

- ❖ Trauma (before and during incarceration)
- ❖ Drug and Alcohol Problems
- ❖ Mental and behavioral health issues
- ❖ Family reunification issues
- ❖ Relationship formation difficulties
- ❖ Financial issues (child support arrearage, court fees, unemployment, housing, etc.)

Challenges to Mentoring Former Prisoners

- Sometimes viewed as another form of reporting
- Sometimes viewed as being reduced to the level of a child
- Mentors are sometimes viewed as well-meaning, but unable to relate to the lives of participants
- Staying engaged with a mentor can be difficult to juggle with work

Effective Strategies

- Complement group mentoring with 1:1 support
- Solicit input from participants
- Utilize communications tools as springboards for group mentoring discussion
- Engage participants in leadership roles
- Utilize transferable lessons and fundamental mentoring principles
 - Planning, recruitment, screening, training, match support and supervision

Effective Strategies

- Establish equitable, peer-to-peer relationships
- Understand mentoring as relationship driven
- Consider calling mentors by another name
- Train mentors in group facilitation as well as good mentoring practice
- Train mentors on challenges specific to mentoring ex-prisoners

Effective Strategies

- Conduct and document background checks on all mentors
- Establish parameters for participation of ex-prisoners as mentors
- Provide participants with a wide variety of group mentoring activities
- Engage in mentoring as soon as possible once enrolled in program

Conclusion

Mentoring can play a strong role in helping former prisoners stabilize, get jobs, keep jobs, stay in reentry programs and not recidivate.

Resources

www.ppv.org

www.dol.gov

Questions?
